

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN OFFENDER TREATMENT: THAILAND'S EXPERIENCE

*Kittipong Kittayarak**

I. INTRODUCTION

The principal objectives of this paper are to provide general information on the role of the community in the treatment of offenders in Thailand and to share with the audience some relatively successful programmes and activities that we have conducted so far.

The paper is divided into four main parts: the first deals with the significance of community involvement in recent years; the second demonstrates key players whose partnership in the areas of correctional and non-custodial treatment of offenders have played significant roles in enhancing the quality of offender treatment; the third demonstrates some of the relatively successful programmes and activities aimed at enhancing participation from the wide array of like-minded alliances, with the focus on 'correctional network and alliances' for adult offenders, as well as the programmes in collaboration with key partners in the areas of probation and juvenile protection; and the last discusses the lessons learnt in offender treatment and the implication of community involvement in the enhancement of programmes and activities to support the treatment of offenders. By the end of this paper, the audience should have a better understanding of community involvement in correctional and related areas of work, including the community-based treatment of offenders. For policy makers and practitioners, this paper reveals Thailand's experience in involving the community with the treatment of offenders which, more or less, can be adapted to improve the quality of services in their jurisdictions.

II. WHY 'COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT'?

Until recent years, like in many other jurisdictions, the administration of the criminal justice system in Thailand had been a relatively 'closed' business which limited access from outside. Individuals, either living in or working for it, were not necessarily recognized by the public. Even if they were, their image was usually negative. This was particularly true in the areas of corrections, and the administration of juvenile justice. Therefore, by bringing in outsiders and educating them about prison work and prisoners, society would have a better understanding of the system and would recognize the significant roles of the system and the benefits of community involvement.

In the area of corrections, for instance, it has been common knowledge that the prison staff had to endure working in an unsafe and stressful atmosphere, especially when the prison population dramatically rose between the late 1990s and the 2000s. The Thai corrections service has also had a chronic, severe lack of staff. The ratio of corrections officers to inmates has been around 1 to 22. Accordingly, they have to wear many 'hats', i.e. 'guards', 'teachers' and 'counsellors', even though they are not necessarily experts in those areas. Prisoners, on the other hand, cried quietly for improvement of their living conditions. The management then acknowledged the need for change when they encountered various challenges at the time, including serious security incidents, and found that these problems could not be dealt with by the Department of Corrections (DOC) alone. Rather, they should be professionally and systematically managed by all parties involved – both public and private sectors, within and outside the criminal justice system. This was when the public witnessed a range of attempts to make the offender custody and treatment process 'accessible' by the public. *Prison Visit*

* Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice, Thailand.

for Students, *Family Day* and *Correctional Consultation Committees* were among initiatives implemented to involve the community, families of prisoners and the public in correctional works.

Similar observations can be made in the area of work relating to the community-based treatment undertaken by the Department of Probation (DOP). Due to the expanded scope of work in 2002 to include compulsory drug treatment under the responsibility of the DOP, probation officers have to face heavy caseloads. Employing only 2,000 probation officers, the DOP has to deal with 300,000 cases of probationers, parolees and drug addicts each year. To cope with such a caseload, the Department has to seek help from outside agencies. Various schemes aiming to gain assistance from the public in community-based treatment have been increasingly set up in recent years. These include the volunteer probation officer scheme, community justice network, and multi-agency drug rehabilitation.

In addition to helping with the caseload, the DOP needs support and assistance from the public in reintegration of offenders into society. Without cooperation and understanding from the public, offenders can not live in the community. Existing agencies in the community, ranging from local organizations to social networks, are all important in providing essential support for offender resettlement, such as employment, housing, education, welfare services, and health services. Involvement of these agencies can be in the form of technical assistance, financial support, and cooperation in specific programmes.

The door of opportunity for the agencies in the criminal justice system was opened even wider when the Office of Civil Service announced its policy to reform the civil service system in Thailand in the early 2000s. The *new public management* scheme is one of the developments launched to promote the transparency and accountability of public agencies. According to this new movement, each agency is subject to public scrutiny and is encouraged to promote community involvement. The criminal justice agencies took the advantage of this reform policy to improve their organization management and services, one of which was to engage the public in prison management. The initial strategies involved inviting outsiders to visit prisons and juvenile detention centres, educating the public of missions and the limitations of corrections, creating opportunities for them to participate in the offender treatment process and publicly recognizing their contribution. At the end of the day, the expertise and experience of the outsiders in the areas in which the staff of the criminal justice system lack such skills definitely reinforced the effectiveness of the offender treatment process.

For a bigger step to promote public support, the Ministry of Justice of Thailand has imposed a policy to enhance cooperation between criminal justice agencies and all sectors of society for effective aftercare services and reintegration, in accordance with the Strategic Plan of 'Returning Decent Citizens to Society'. Within this framework, the DOC, for instance, launched its initial campaign in 2006 to educate the public of correctional works and their limitations. The original targeted audience were Sub-district Administration Agencies, which are the lowest level of local government agencies. At the initial phase, the two partners worked together to improve the quality of 'welfare provision'. Each prison was encouraged to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the local Sub-district Administration Agency to set a framework on their operations.

In addition, the DOC also declared the 'correctional network and alliance' policy which aimed at bringing in all stakeholders. Apart from the local governments, key institutions and individuals in the community, such as employers, scholars, educational institutions, temples, etc., were invited to join the network to help improve the three main areas of corrections: therapeutic programmes, pre-release activities and reintegration.

III. PARTNERS AND PARTNERSHIP NETWORKS

To serve the new set of vision and missions of adult and juvenile corrections, which focus on transparency and accountability, one of the pioneering strategies is to draw support from the general public. As presented in the previous section, the roles played by the community and the private sector are deemed necessary and invaluable for the effectiveness of the treatment process, particularly in terms of financial resources and staff. In the adult correctional services, key players can be considered at two levels: national and local. At national level, the significant roles of representatives from various sectors of society can be viewed through the establishment of the Correctional Advisory Council (CAC) in 2004. The CAC comprises 25 individuals who are retired and current senior prison administrators, academics, public attorneys, law enforcement

administrators, business people, representatives from the press, NGOs and senior administrators from other public sectors outside the justice circles. The responsibilities of the CAC include coordinating with all stakeholders within and outside the criminal justice system to improve the quality of custodial measures and prisoner rehabilitation; receiving complaints relating to prison management from prisoners and the public; and suggesting policy on aftercare and reintegration.

In addition, in order to strengthen the reintegration process, the DOC has worked closely with eight government agencies, namely the Department of Social Development and Welfare, Department of Local Administration, Department of Employment, Department of Skill Development, Provincial Administration Organization Council of Thailand, the National Municipal League of Thailand, Sub-district Administration Organization Council of Thailand, and the City of Bangkok Metropolitan. Agreements between the DOC and these agencies were signed in 2008 to systematically manage offenders' pre-release programmes and promote the community reintegration process and activities (in particular, employability development and public acceptance promotion) which are believed to help prevent recidivism. The focus of this cooperation is on two principal activities:

The agreements signed between the DOC and its partners indicated clearly the responsibility of each party:

Framework for Correctional Facility

1. Update prisoners statistics;
2. Survey and provide relevant local agencies with ex-prisoners' data;
3. Strengthen constructive relations with relevant agencies;
4. Provide necessary pre-release programmes;
5. Cooperate with the partner agencies in arranging pre-release programmes for prisoners and educating the community for a better understanding of prisoners;
6. Arrange Restorative Justice activities to reconcile the conflicts between victims, prisoners, and prisoners' families during the period of incarceration or, where possible, after release;
7. Request partner agencies to report escapes;
8. Cooperate with partner agencies to conduct assessment and follow-up measures; and
9. Carry out other activities depending on the facilities' competency and conditions.

Framework for Partners

1. Cooperate with correctional facilities in the delivery of pre-release programmes for both prisoners and for community, such as offering instructors, introducing vacant jobs, and funding prisoners' welfare, etc.;
2. Provide opportunities for ex-prisoners i.e. hire them;
3. Support 'house visit' programme for local ex-prisoners;
4. Financially support staff and visiting costs, including welfare for pre/post-release prisoners and their families;
5. Support justice activities such as Restorative Activities for Prisoners, Families, Community, and Victims. Inform victims about prisoners' behaviour (where possible). Arrange activities for prisoners' repentance;
6. Provide vehicles and staff for tracing escaped prisoners;
7. Assist in the follow-up and assessment of prisoner programmes and activities; and
8. Carry out other activities depending on the partner's capacity and what is in the agreement.

This 'social welfare partnership' in corrections provides benefits for all parties involved. With the cooperation of other government agencies and the community, the prison system is able to deliver a more comprehensive and effective offender treatment service without requiring a great amount of public funds. Correctional networks and alliances as well as the public should have a better understanding of the offender treatment process and its limitations and can take part in helping improve the quality of such services. Moreover, this scheme provides the 'outsiders' a chance to observe and scrutinize the works of the DOC

with a principal aim to make the correctional system more effective and efficient. Last but not least, offenders can benefit from the well-organized programmes and activities which could help them reintegrate into the community after release. They are made aware that all parties involved are ready to give them a second chance so that they have confidence and determination to change not just for themselves but also for society as a whole.

At local level, in addition, the early attempt at drawing support from the general public involves the volunteers in prisons' rehabilitative programmes and activities. A recently published research paper (Rehabilitation Research Group, 2009) reveals that there were 3,969 volunteers participating in offender treatment of the DOC. These volunteers can be roughly divided into two main groups: government and non-government agencies. The government agencies are categorized into those in the criminal justice system and those outside the perimeter. On the other hand, the non-government agencies and individuals were varied in their backgrounds, ranging from business owners, NGOs representatives, company employees, academics, retired civil servants, monks and farmers. The number and the diversity of these volunteers (so called 'correctional alliances') have gradually increased each year, reflecting the success of the initial attempt to include as many stakeholders as possible in the correctional system.

As presented in Chart 1, the majority of volunteers (23.5%) participated in donation activities. Prisons, juvenile detention centres and probation offices across the country always encourage and welcome donations from the public. They can donate almost anything deemed suitable for the wellbeing of imprisoned offenders, from financial to material donations.

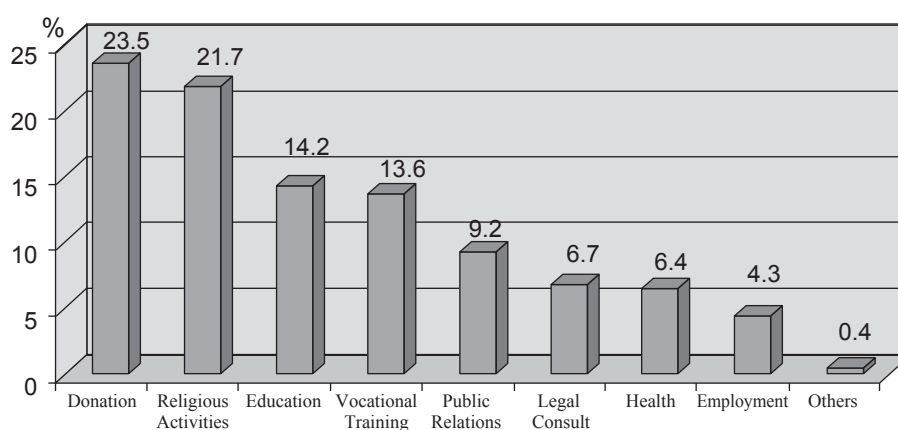


Chart 1: The Roles of Networks and Alliances in Corrections

IV. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

Working with all stakeholders from the community can come in different forms and methods. Over the past decades, the agencies in the Ministry of Justice have received relatively strong support from all sectors of society, from the first step whereby offenders enter the criminal justice system until they finish serving their sentences. This section highlights the projects and activities which reflect constructive partnerships between those agencies and the community. They are categorized into four groups, with reference to their principal goals (although some projects may contain various goals). The first group includes the projects and activities which involve the community in strengthening self improvement and the therapeutic element of offender rehabilitation; the second are those which attempt to raise public awareness and acceptance; the third are community-based diversion programmes with cooperation from all stakeholders including victims; and, finally, I would like to mention the Kamlangjai (Inspire) Model of the Kamlangjai project under the initiative and support of HRH Princess Bajrakitiyabha, which has become a unique and effective model of public involvement in the treatment of offenders in Thailand.

A. Involving the Community to Strengthen Self-Improvement and Rehabilitation Programmes

In the first group the projects and activities which involve the community to strengthen the self-improvement

and therapeutic element of offender rehabilitation will be the focus of discussion.

1. Vocational Training and the Prison Product Exhibition

For adult offenders, vocational training has been a key rehabilitative programme for prisoner rehabilitation for decades. As a supplement to the formal educational curriculum offered inside prisons, a wide range of vocational training programmes are provided for prisoners interested in developing and/or improving their working skills. Results from the classification process are also taken into consideration when assigning prisoners to a training course. This is to effectively respond to a prisoner's risks and needs. At present, courses provided include carpentry, construction, hair dressing, cooking, Thai massage, etc. With reference to our experience, the more employability that the offenders have, the less likely it is that they will reoffend.

The community involvement in vocational training is twofold. Firstly, they can participate in the training courses as instructors. Currently, most instructors in the programmes are those invited from outside prisons, for example, from local vocational training colleges, schools and local companies, all of whom are experts in their particular fields. Secondly, the public can support prisoners' vocational training programmes by donating financial resources and training equipment and purchasing prisoners' finished goods.

Each year the Annual Prison Product Exhibition is held to promote a vocational training programme for prisoners. Also, it can raise public awareness and acceptance. It is expected that visitors will have a better understanding of prisons and prisoners, at least of the aspect that prisoners spend a meaningful time behind bars by attending activities that can reshape their attitudes and behaviours. In addition, prisoners' capacity will be recognized through the products and services that they produce and deliver. When a prisoner's products are purchased, 50% of the profit will be deposited to the prisoner's account as their reward. The Exhibition is considered one of the significant channels to connect prisons and prisoners with the outside world. Moreover, it is treated as a labour market where employers are invited to observe the potential of prisoners who, in the near future, might be their skilful employees after release.

In recent years, during the Exhibition, the DOC has brought out some well-trained prisoners to teach short vocational courses for interested people. As the name *Kru Kon Kook* (literally meaning 'teachers from behind bars') suggests, the main aims of this project are twofold: firstly, prisoners are offered a venue in the real world to practice what they have learnt inside, and secondly, giving a formal lecture to a public audience is a well-planned strategy which promotes acceptance and respect for prisoners almost with no cost. The courses taught by prisoners cooking, baking, 'batik' painting, water colour painting, etc.

2. Prisoners with Higher Education Programme

In addition to a basic educational curriculum and vocational training programmes, the DOC offers higher education courses for prisoners who are keen to equip themselves with knowledge and skills of their interest. With close and extensive cooperation from Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU), the DOC has been able to systematically manage the higher education programme for prisoners since 1987. The enrolment process, course materials and assessment are of the standard offered to the general public. Prisoners who are interested in participating in the programme can request the application form from the university through their prisons. The applications then will be sent out to the university. If the prisoners' qualifications fit with the requirements, they will be eligible for enrolment. Course materials will then be sent to the prisoners. Particular prisons are designated as STOU centres where prisoners are temporarily transferred in order for them to participate in the activities required by the course and also to sit exams. After they achieve all requirements and their degrees are awarded, the annual graduation ceremony will be held in Bangkok Central Prison where all graduates are presented with certificates.

Generally, prisoners are responsible for all related expenses when they choose to pursue higher education. Accordingly, at the early stage of this programme, prisoners who had financial difficulty were unintentionally left out. The significant move of the DOC to effectively deal with this situation was the establishment of 'Prisoner Education Fund' in 1995. The main goal of the fund is to provide financial assistance for prisoners who are in need. They, however, must also demonstrate good behaviour and good results from their study to be eligible for this subsidy. The fund committee is responsible for the administration of the fund and make the final decision for scholarship awards.

Recent statistics from the Educational Promotion Division, DOC, show that the numbers of prisoners enrolled at the STOU during the past three academic years were relatively stable (5,534, 5,570 and 5,512

147TH INTERNATIONAL SENIOR SEMINAR
VISITING EXPERTS' PAPERS

prisoners in 2007, 2008 and 2009 respectively). When looking the number of graduates from 1987 to 2009, there were 1,519 prisoners completing their degrees while serving time in prisons. The majority of them (34%) graduated with law degrees. Most of them informally reported that they wanted to study the law so that they could understand and fight their cases.

Rank	Subject	1987–2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total	%
1	Law	332	46	47	39	53	517	34.04
2	Management Science	143	29	35	35	34	276	18.17
3	Agriculture and Cooperatives Promotion	126	19	41	26	40	252	16.59
4	Communication Arts	97	12	15	13	18	155	10.20
5	Political Science	79	19	13	12	21	144	9.48
6	Liberal Arts	37	3	4	3	8	55	3.62
7	Science	1	1	27	6	7	42	2.76
8	Economics	23	1	8	4	4	40	2.63
9	Education	10	4	–	2	–	16	1.05
10	Home Economics	16	–	–	–	–	16	1.05
11	Human Ecology	0	–	–	1	5	6	0.39
	Total	864	134	190	141	190	1,519	100.00

Table 1. Number of prisoners who graduated from Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, from 1987–2009.

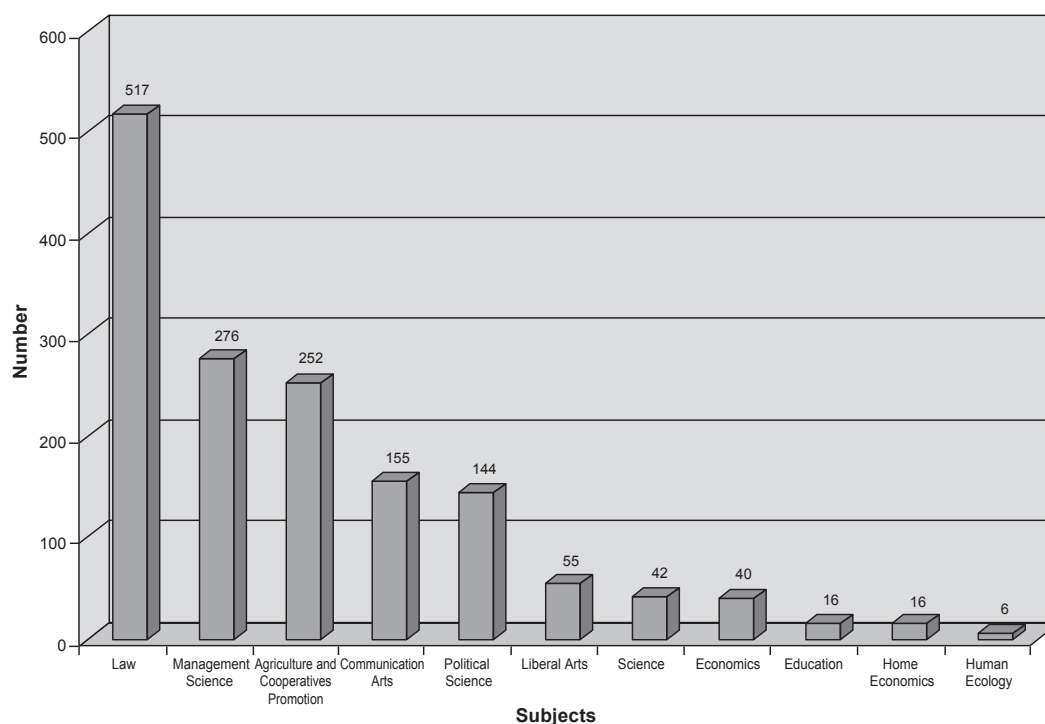


Chart 2. Number of prisoners who graduated from Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, from 1987–2009.

As of February 2011, there are currently 3,266 prisoners enrolling with the STOU (this number is expected to increase when the admission process for the current semester (Spring 2011) is complete). Unsurprisingly, the favourite course among prisoners is still law (n=914, 27.99%). At present, each prison is encouraged to seek cooperation from local universities and colleges to expand opportunities for higher

education for prisoners. Mahasarakam Provincial Prison, for instance, signed an MOU with Mahasarakam University to provide prisoners with access to a range of courses at both undergraduate and graduate level.

Rank	Subject	Male	Female	Total	%
1	Law	859	55	914	27.99
2	Management Science	569	148	717	21.95
3	Agriculture and Co-operatives Promotion	557	43	603	18.46
4	Political Science	427	21	448	13.72
5	Communication Arts	247	69	316	9.68
6	Liberal Arts	80	36	116	3.55
7	Science and Technology	60	7	67	2.05
8	Human Ecology	24	22	46	1.41
9	Economics	23	1	24	0.73
10	Education	7	3	10	0.31
11	Others	3	–	5	0.15
	Total	2,860	406	3,266	100.00

Table 2. Top ten favourite subjects for the academic year 2010-11.

3. Drama Therapy

A new intervention combining theatre work and drama has been employed to rehabilitate juvenile offenders and young drug abusers. With assistance from drama groups, the Department of Probation and Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection now attempt to apply drama therapy with juvenile offenders. This initiative has been proposed by the community drama groups who believe that the use of theatre techniques could help young offenders build their self-esteem and modify their behaviour. These drama groups voluntarily organize drama therapy workshops for interested young offenders. After participating in the programme, young offenders said that they felt more confident, enjoyed their lives, and had a better relationship with others. Besides, a group of participating young offenders can perform on stage, in plays, mimes, and poetry readings, for their families and general audiences. Although it is still a pilot scheme which cannot be continuously implemented, more drama groups are interested in this scheme and eager to accept young offenders to take part in their workshops.

4. Art Therapy: 'Art for All' Project

The 'Art for All' Project is considered an innovative alternative for prisoner rehabilitation which aims to deal with prisoners' emotions, attitudes and perceptions by using art as a tool. Supported by the 'Art for All' Foundation, the programme emerged in 2004 following the gracious guidance of HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. Prisoners in the programme are able to learn not only about art, art appreciation and the creation of art works of their interests from outside professional artists, but they also have a chance to learn about themselves. The principal philosophy behind the project is that every prisoner has talent which they might or might not acknowledge and that it is the job of the correctional system to encourage them to use that talent in the right way. Art is just one mechanism that helps bring out prisoners' creativity and imagination and that reflects what is in their minds. This is of great value for related and further therapeutic programmes. Products of their participation are regularly presented to the public at the prisoners' art exhibitions which are held at both national and local venues. Besides, 'Art Camp' is also arranged for prisoners so that they are able to meet with their peers who have similar interests and who can share their knowledge and experience.

5. Music Therapy and the Prisoner Choir

With a similar approach to 'Art for All', music therapy has been employed as an alternative method for prisoner rehabilitation for a decade. The project emerged in the early 2000s to initially deal with drug offenders. These offenders often present a high risk of reoffending if no appropriate rehabilitation programmes are provided. The DOC acknowledges the need to find a range of initiatives to tackle their issues and finds that music therapy is one of many options that has potential to effectively respond to drug prisoners' risk and needs. With cooperation from the private sector, in particular the Christian Prison Ministry Foundation, the

music therapy programme was delivered in a number of correctional facilities for drug offenders at its first stage before being expanded to cover general prisons. Prisoners in the programme are able to learn various skills in music like vocals, singing, and performing from professional music therapists, singers and musicians who volunteer to work in the programme. More importantly, there are sessions that enable them to learn about and understand themselves—i.e. their capacities, their mistakes and their responsibilities. Each year major concert events are held for these prisoners to perform in front of the public and their families. Most of these concerts are charity events which grant an opportunity for prisoners to give back to the community. The success of this project is evidenced by the booked seats at every concert the prisoners perform!

B. Raising Public Awareness and Acceptance

In addition to the programmes and activities designed specifically to help the offenders gain a toehold in their effort to reform and rehabilitate, it has been widely acknowledged that programmes aimed at raising public awareness and acceptance can provide an environment conducive to such efforts. Below are listed some of the key activities:

1. TV Series: 'Before Eighteen'

The use of appropriate media can effectively educate and raise the awareness of the public. '*Before Eighteen*' is one good example. This television series, based on true stories, launched by the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection in cooperation with a TV channel in Thailand, presented the life stories of six juveniles who had different backgrounds but all ended up in juvenile detention centres. The series aimed to provide the public with stories from other angles, in particular the juveniles themselves, their families and government agencies. The viewers would understand why these juveniles did what they did and how society could prevent that from happening. It also attempted to deter at-risk juveniles from following the same path and also to give support to those who were already in detention centres. The series ended by suggesting that there is always hope for everyone, even those who used to do something wrong, and most importantly, that everyone needs a second chance.

2. 'Sports Behind Bars'

As part of rehabilitation and reintegration, the 'Sports Behind Bars' Project was initiated to promote prisoners' capacity in sports and to encourage them to meaningfully make use of their time behind bars. Moreover, this project is aimed at showing society that many prisoners have talents in something, in this case sports, and that what they need from society is a second chance. This project invites a range of sports authorities, professional sports associations and private sponsors, for instance the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, the Sports Authority of Thailand, the Professional Boxing Association of Thailand and the Football Association of Thailand, to participate in prisons' sport events. Support has been overwhelming in terms of budget, trainers and equipment. A number of qualified prisoners were sent out to compete in numerous significant events and at different levels - international, national and local.

One of the most recognized prisoner athletes is Samsun Sor Siripon. She was convicted of a drug offence and participated in boxing training while an inmate in a facility for female drug offenders on the outskirts of Bangkok. Her talent caught the trainers' eye and gave her an opportunity to fight outside prisons. With her dedication and determination, Samsun won a World Champion title (Flyweight Class) of the World Boxing Association (WBA) in 2007. She soon became very well-known. Her success opened the door of opportunity for many other prisoners, especially those with sport talents.

'*World Cup Behind Bars*' is also a well-known prison event. Although it is held every four years like the formal FIFA World Cup, the event receives attention and remarkable support from the sport agencies involved, in particular, the Football Association of Thailand and Ministry of Tourism and Sports, as well as the media and the public. Foreign prisoners, especially from countries which have qualified for the final rounds of the World Cup, together with Thai prisoners, compete for the 'World Cup Behind Bars' champion title and a trophy resembling the real one. Meanwhile, those who are not qualified for a player position are encouraged to participate in the event as supporters. Judging from the public's and the press' feedback, the criminal justice system benefits a great deal from this event in terms of public awareness. In most news coverage, if not all, prisoners were presented as individuals who had made a wrong decision and mistakes, not as criminals. Optimistically, this suggests that society is likely to give prisoners a second chance if it is educated and assured that prisoners are treated effectively and have paid a certain price for what they did to society.

3. Prison Open Days for Diplomats and the Press

Occasionally, the DOC arranges Prison Tours for diplomatic representatives and the press to generate a better understanding of correctional works domestically and internationally. Deemed a public-relations channel to inform the outside world about prisons, the project invites press and diplomatic officers to join the tour to visit a prison and witness life behind bars. This activity solidly and positively demonstrates the difficulties of correctional tasks.

C. Diversion Programmes

1. Family and Community Group Conferencing

Family and Community Group Conferencing (FCGC) provides an opportunity for family and the community to become actively involved in rehabilitating and holding juvenile offenders accountable through the restorative justice process. Implemented by the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection in 2003, the Family and Community Group Conferencing (FCGC) scheme has been used to divert juvenile offenders from the juvenile justice system as well as provide an opportunity for victims to be restored and offenders to be held accountable for what they have done. When a child arrested by the police is sent to a detention centre, the director of the centre can arrange FCGC if both victim and child agree. The conference will consist of victim(s), the juvenile offender and his or her family, representatives from the community, police, a psychologist, and a facilitator. In case that the involved parties, i.e. victims, juvenile offender and their families, can make an agreement and the offender consents to be under the control of the director in the follow up monitoring, the director will send a proposal to the prosecutor for a non-prosecution order. The outcomes of this scheme are significant: victim satisfaction, a better understanding within the family of offenders, and a decrease in the reoffending rate among participating offenders.

2. Diversion Programmes for Drug Addicts

This alternative approach was adopted as a result of a new policy to tackle narcotic drug problems in 2002. The new emphasis was on the holistic approach to the solution of drug problems. Particularly, the policy stressed that drug users and drug addicts, who previously had been prosecuted as criminal offenders, are to be regarded as patients who need rehabilitation treatment.

A new legal framework has been introduced to allow for integrated treatment of drug-related offenders. Under the new scheme, concerned government agencies work closely together to provide integrated responses to the treatment of drug offenders. These agencies include the Office of the Narcotic Control Board, the Royal Thai Police, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection, the Court of Justice, the Royal Thai Army, the Royal Thai Navy, the Royal Thai Air Force, the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Interior, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, and the Department of Probation serving as the focal point.

The 2002 Drug Rehabilitation Act stipulates that a person charged with “drug addiction”, “drug addiction and possession”, “drug addiction and possession for disposal”, or “drug addiction and disposal,” if the amount of possession is less than the limitation of the law, is to be transferred to the court within 48 hours, and in the case of young persons, 24 hours. The court then will be able to divert the case from the traditional criminal justice system and refer the person to designated facilities for drug assessment. The evaluation which follows would determine whether the person is a drug addict and, if so, he or she is to be referred to a drug rehabilitation centre for a specified period of time. After a successful completion of the programme with satisfactory results, the criminal case will be dropped, with the offender having no criminal record.

There are two types of rehabilitation schemes available for drug-related offenders in Thailand: compulsory and voluntary rehabilitation. While the compulsory rehabilitation programmes are implemented as prescribed by law, the success of such rehabilitation is closely related to the degree to which concerned agencies are able to convince the drug users or drug addicts to receive treatment in the voluntary programme. In this connection, the involvement of the community, especially through the ‘Community Justice Network’, not only provides a strong foundation for the active engagement of the family members of the drug addicts, it also plays a major role in the persuasion of drug users/addicts to receive treatment in voluntary treatment programmes without having to arrest them. Family and community support and encouragement thus plays essential roles during and after the treatment. These networks collaborate closely with the volunteer probation officers in the aftercare of drug users and addicts within the community after the treatment.

3. The Kamlangjai Project

The Kamlangjai Project (literally “inspiration”) provides a unique platform where a dynamic and sustainable model of community and public participation can be fostered.

The Project was launched on 31 October 2006 under the strong leadership of HRH Princess Bajrakitiyabha. Much of the early effort has been focused on enhancing the quality of life of female inmates and the babies born to incarcerated mothers, in a way that supplements the work of the DOC. In addition to providing the right incentive and support for the DOC to pay closer attention to providing adequate healthcare for female inmates and their babies at key women’s correctional facilities nationwide, the Project has grown to attract a number of key partners from the private sector, charity organizations and NGOs who bring in unique types of support according to their specific areas of specialty, thus significantly enriching the overall quality of the programme.

The royal initiative receives various kinds of support from prominent private organizations. For instance, the Rutnin-Gimbel LASIK Centre, among the first partners of the Project, came up with an idea to provide free eye care to female inmates. When the scope of the Kamlangjai Project extended to Chiang Mai Women’s Correctional Institute, the Rotary Club, Chiang Mai University and Naresuan University took part in providing health and sanitary care to pregnant inmates and their infants. Vocational training for female inmates was also significantly enriched with a great variety of curricula that suits the needs of inmate trainees, thanks to many private companies who volunteered to provide training. Because of the success of the Project in Bangkok and Chiang Mai, the “Kamlangjai model” of involvement of the local private sector in the city of a prison’s location, the Kamlangjai Project has expanded its successful model of cooperation to other provinces such as Ayuthaya, Nakornsrihammarat, Trang, Rayong, etc.

On the social awareness campaign, the Kamlangjai Project took partnership with the Mall Department Store and TV Channel 3 to initiate a ‘Bra Charity: Spirit of Love’ which allowed the general public to show their moral support for women in prison. Grammy Music Production dispatched a number of artists to bring entertainment into the correctional facilities under the ‘First Real Love’ programme, while the RS – another major entertainment network company, pooled their great talents to compose a song in honour of Her Royal Highness’s great work, entitled ‘Jai Nam Tang’- literally, “the heart leads the way” or “Flame of Hope”.

Realizing that the issues faced by female inmates in Thailand are not limited to Thai society, the Project took on a broader and more universal approach to the problem by bringing the experience of female inmates seen through the Kamlangjai Project to the world audience at the Seventeenth Session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) at the United Nations Office at Vienna, Austria, and by inviting the international criminal justice community to begin to look at the standards and norms governing the prison regimes with greater sensitivity to gender difference. From this realization has emerged another royal initiative called “Enhancing Lives of Females Inmates” or the ELFI Project, which successfully rallied for a new standard for the treatment of female inmates. The so-called the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Female Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Female Offenders, or the Bangkok Rules, was adopted in the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 2010. It can be expected that the new standards will supplement the existing standards and norms on the treatment of prisoners, which have been in force since 1955, by introducing a gender perspective.

In addition to the focus on female inmates, the Kamlangjai Project has also taken a keen interest in the quality of life of juvenile offenders. For the past five years, not only has HRH Princess Bajrakitiyabha given her support to female inmates, but her deep concern for the underprivileged also led her to extend her support to children and youths under the care of the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection, Ministry of Justice. The idea is to enhance juvenile rehabilitation through the introduction of religious teaching. The Dhamma Club of Wat Panyanantaram was created to teach Dhamma (Buddhist truth or wisdom) to children in the juvenile facilities to help them to adapt to society. Vocational training is also provided by Chitralada Vocational School, among others.

At present, the Project is treading a new path, growing into an organization fit for undertaking a wide array of enterprises, ranging from enhancing the quality of life of female inmates to providing sustainable support for offenders in their efforts to reintegrate into society and providing aftercare services. The new direction can be perceived through various undertakings by the Project in recent years. From vocational

training, where focus has been placed on support for developing adequate skills for female offenders, the Project has now begun to emphasize elements which will enable the products made by the offenders to be truly marketable and thus serve as an effective vehicle for sustainable programme management. In addition to the fact that one can now find Kamlangjai products on the shelves of major department stores in Bangkok, on certain occasions, one may come across a new breed of coffee shop where every item on display in the store, from the cookies and brownies, to paintings on the wall, to the set of wood chairs and tables, are products hand-made by inmates.

V. WHAT ARE THE LESSONS LEARNT FROM THAILAND'S EXPERIENCE?

In this section, the lessons learnt from the Thailand's experience in working with the community will be discussed.

A. Making Community Involvement a Major Policy of the Organization and Creating Clear Structures and Frameworks to Work with all Stakeholders

We found that if we want to encourage community involvement in the treatment of offenders we have to work hard. Normally, public perception of corrections work is not positive. In the eyes of the public, a prison is an off-limit, danger zone, where nobody knows what is going on behind those high walls. Most people are afraid to live near prisons, not to mention go inside or work directly with prisoners. As for the corrections officers, they are not normally trained to be good community coordinators. They need to be given clear instructions and guidelines as to what extent the public should be involved in prison activities. For this reason, to be effective, community involvement should be a major policy of the organization. In addition, some concrete frameworks should be formulated so that all stakeholders, including the community members and corrections officers at every level, are properly and adequately informed of what is expected of them. In this connection, the Thai experience in setting up organizational structures at national and local levels and the clear frameworks stipulated in Memoranda of Understanding with key partners has given a tremendous boost to community participation in corrections activities, both in terms of quality and quantity of involvement.

B. Encouraging Community Involvement as 'a partner' as Early as Possible

To enhance the quality of offender treatment, the community, particularly the groups that will become a close network and alliance with corrections, should be encouraged to participate in the process as early as possible. The earlier they get involved, the more knowledge and understanding they will have about prisoners. This will also strengthen the sentence plan of offenders by responding to the risks and needs of offenders more effectively. For those in prisons, the role of community should be continuously promoted from admission until release. In addition, evidence shows that community involvement is very crucial in the transition and reintegration process. Nelson and Trone (2000, pp.7-8) point out that:

“Protecting the investment, large or small, in pre-release programming requires developing some form of community follow-up. Research suggests that prison programming focused on life issues, such as employment, drug abuse, and family relations, is most effective if the work continues in the community after release.

There are many ways to create links between custody-based programs and services in the community. The Montgomery County Pre-Release Center is staffed by several community coordinators who place offenders with service agencies before release. The Metropolitan Transition Center in Baltimore plans to partner with three community development corporations that will take a case management approach to helping inmates get the services they need after release. In Ohio inmates learn about organizations that can help them after release because these agencies run the state's mandatory pre-release course. Officials at the Illinois Department of Correction took that approach one step further by hiring a local non-profit agency to run two community corrections centers in Chicago.”

From Thailand's experience, projects which treat the community as 'a partner' at the earliest stage, i.e. inviting them to help in planning prisoner programmes or welcoming their comments and suggestions before finalizing the programme, tend to gain more support than usual projects or activities which invite the community to participate later in the process. In other words, the sense of 'partnership' can increase the community's commitment in offender treatment. That is, when they feel that they also are the 'owner' of the

programme and that they need to effectively manage and support it.

C. Utilizing the Media to promote a Positive Attitude towards Offender Treatment

Although many programmes and campaigns received a warm welcome from the community, some appeared to have difficulties in achieving their goals. The outcome analysis by programme administrators revealed that public attitudes towards prison and prisoners is one of the key factors that every programme should take into consideration. This implies that the criminal justice agencies need to work harder to educate the public for a better understanding of prison work, the offender treatment process and its limitations. Changing the public attitude is not easy, yet it is achievable.

It goes without saying that public attitude can be influenced by the media. Prisons, for example, are portrayed in most Hollywood movies as places of harsh punishment, poor hygiene and corrupt management. In the real world, escapes, security incidents and prison assaults are the kinds of news which make front page news. Sadly, ex-offenders who have completed all required rehabilitative programmes and successfully reintegrated into the community after release with permanent jobs and understanding families do not draw much attention from the media. It is, therefore, an important strategy to know how to use the media to ensure people understand more about corrections work, particularly of how important it is that the public should give inmates a second chance to reintegrate into the society. It is also important to involve the media in the work of justice agencies. Inviting the press to join justice seminars and training on some relevant topics, or arranging a press tour to visit prisons and observe what is going on inside, are among the proactive approaches employed by Thailand to provide correct information on justice and prison work for a better understanding and a positive image. As mentioned earlier, producing movies to tell the stories of juvenile offenders, bringing out prisoner choirs to perform in public and encouraging prisoner boxers to compete in public tournaments are also parts of the proactive strategies to use the media to change public attitudes. As experience suggests that creating and maintaining a positive image are not simple tasks, the criminal justice system can no longer afford to wait for an incident to happen and then respond to all the news coverage of the case.

D. Information Sharing between Agencies

Confidentiality can be a problem for criminal justice agencies when working across organizations. The National Institute of Corrections (2004) points out that “organizational boundaries often serve as a firewall to stymie information sharing. Confidentiality requirements legitimately protect citizens’ interests. But agencies often interpret confidentiality requirements expansively, and invoke them as blanket limits on information sharing” (p. 36). It also suggests that:

“While many agencies have a stake in the transition process, their priorities, policies and procedures relating to transition often are inconsistent or countervailing. The flow of information among these agencies is impaired by organizational boundaries, incompatible information systems, or conflicts in priorities. When offenders are released to community supervision, too often there is little continuity between their prison programs and activities, their re-entry plans, and the type of supervision and services they receive once released. (p.37)”

When the DOC first started to step out of its comfort zone to cooperate with other agencies and the private sector, one of the significant problems was the complexity and inconsistency of information, let alone the confidentiality issue. Meetings at every level, from policy to operations, were the main mechanism to sort out the problem. They paved the way for staff at operational levels to reorganize the information system, especially that of offenders’ profiles. So far, the offenders’ profiles, for example, shared by the DOC and the Department of Probation, have been organized and managed professionally and systematically by staff at local establishments.

The management of information, therefore, should be taken seriously as it would help produce an appropriate plan for each prisoner. Agencies involved should establish an information sharing system so that every party will be able to deliver a service based on the same database and knowledge.

E. Finding Moral, Public Figures to promote Community Involvement

Moral figures have proved to be one of the key elements of offender treatment. The significant roles of the moral figures are to inspire offenders to develop pro-social attitudes and constructive perceptions as well as to promote community involvement in the treatment of offenders. With a monarchical constitution, Thailand is blessed with a gracious royal family whose members have dedicated themselves to the happiness of the Thai people, regardless of their gender, race and socio-economic status. The royal family have been the centre of the society and the highest moral figures for all Thais, including those serving their sentences in the criminal justice system. The ‘Art for All’ and the ‘Prom Punya’ Library for prisoners of HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, and the ‘Kamlangjai’ Project of HRH Princess Bajrakitiyabha, are examples of projects initiated by these moral figures. Offenders participating in the projects reported positive feedback and the support from the community for these projects was overwhelming.

Samsun Sor Siripon, the first female prisoner boxer to win a WBA World Champion title, is also a role model for other offenders. Her determination, dedication and capability are a message that she sent out to her fellow prisoners, other offenders in the system and the public. Moral figures, therefore, can be anyone. In jurisdictions with no monarchy, the administrators may consider inviting athletes, actors, celebrities or even ex-offenders who present an interest in offender treatment and, most importantly, have a positive impact on society.

F. From Agencies to Individuals

The aforementioned examples of prisoner programmes demonstrate a certain level of success in inviting the public to participate in offender treatment. Relevant agencies, in particular from the public sector, tend to be the biggest supporter of the criminal justice system, particularly the prison service. Their support in terms of budget and other resources, however, are limited, as they also have their own obligations. Administrators, therefore, recognize the need to seek more cooperation from other areas, including the private sector and NGOs, and the necessity to promote involvement at the *individual* level. The opportunity is that the private sector and NGOs are now educated in how the criminal justice system works and have a better understanding of offenders.¹ To encourage individuals to participate in correctional activities these days should be more convenient than in the past. What the system needs to take into account is the improvement of appropriate access channels for interspersed individuals.

A study by the Office of Correctional Administrative and Research and Development (2009) on the attitude of correctional networks and alliances revealed that the majority (35.0%) participated in prisoner treatment because they were requested by prisons and that 33.1% volunteered to work with prisoners (Table 3). The main reasons to participate in prisoner programmes suggested the willingness of these individuals to help prisoners (Table 4). In addition, most of current participants agree that the public sector should be encouraged to take part in offender treatment process (Chart 3). Results from this study suggest that there are many individuals out there who have potential to become ‘correctional partners’. The administrators, therefore, should consider launching an effective campaign to bring them in and utilize their capacity.

Channels	Number	%
Requested by prisons	189	35.0
Volunteers	179	33.1
Suggested by others	94	17.4
Encouraged by the media	21	3.9
Others (i.e. ‘working with agencies which already participated in the programmes’ and ‘working nearby the prison and willing to help’)	57	10.6
Total	540	100

Table 3: Access points for current correctional networks and alliances

¹ 83% (N=360) of correctional networks and alliances reported that after participating in offender treatment process, they have a better understanding of prisoners (Office of Correctional Administrative and Research and Development, 2009).

Reasons	Number	%
To make themselves beneficial to others	88	24.4
To make 'a merit' ²	22	6.1
To help the underprivileged	100	27.8
All three above reasons	134	37.2
Others	16	4.4
Total	360	100

Table 4: Reasons to participate in correctional works

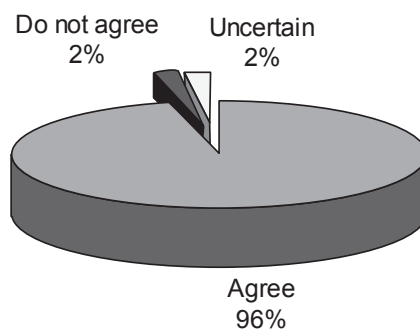


Chart 3: Attitude towards private sector involvement

VI. CONCLUSION

For the effectiveness of offender treatment, the community is one of the key players whose role is so significant that the administrators of the criminal justice agencies cannot overlook it. In fact, their contribution should be regarded as a top priority. Donation money, equipment and clothes might be tangible materials that everyone is acquainted with. However, what is more important is the *second chance* which the community can offer offenders. To achieve this, it is necessary to engage the community in the system from the earliest stage possible so that they can see how the system works and what can be done to improve such operations. The involvement, where it begins at the earliest stage possible, allows for the development of a system which treats all parties involved as 'partners' or 'stakeholders' in the mission. As a 'co-producer' of offender treatment programme, the community will have a chance to learn about the offenders and develop a better understanding about them. This will ultimately raise an awareness and acceptance among the members of the community which will be of great benefit for the prisoner reintegration process – the ultimate goal of the criminal justice system.

² According to Buddhist belief, one method of making merit is helping other human beings and animals, especially those in need, without expecting anything in return.

REFERENCES

- National Institute of Corrections (2004). *Transition from Prison to Community Initiative*. Washington DC.
- Nelson, M. and Trone, J. (2000). *Why Planning for Release Matters*. New York: Vera Institute of Justice.
- Office of Correctional Administrative and Research and Development, Department of Corrections (2009). *Community Alliance and Prisoner Release*.